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## Editorial

### Guest Editors:

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We wrote this editorial on December 10 as the world was celebrating the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This year marks the 70th anniversary of the declaration, and with this remarkable achievement in mind, we present the articles of this NJCIE general issue. The role of education and research in comparative and international education in fostering peaceful, democratic and equitable living conditions in the world cannot be overestimated. The declaration has played a pivotal role in highlighting the significance of education in strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of tolerance and friendship between nations and groups as a precondition for the maintenance of world peace. The declaration has formed a crucial pillar of constitutional bases across countries and their educational legislation and curricula. Its message remains as timely as ever, as citizens around the world give in to populist rhetoric and nationalist and racist political messages garner increasing support in both digital and analogue arenas around the world.

The articles in this general issue vividly document the continued salience of human rights for educational research and the unceasing urgency in understanding how human rights are implemented across countries and within educational institutions. Seventy years after the proclamation of the declaration, it is clear that research in comparative and international education across the broad range of Nordic higher education institutions has continuously paid attention to the topic without necessarily being explicitly framed in these terms. The Nordic countries can be proud of many achievements of their educational institutions, including the high level of respect for and achievement of the right to education for all and the principle of free public schooling. However, the critical research endeavours documented in this general issue also demonstrate the work ahead in terms of

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ensuring respect for inalienable rights, regardless of ethnicity, colour, religion, sexual orientation, language, political standpoint, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Human rights and democratic freedoms are fragile achievements that rely on continuous and careful observance.

This position could not have been made clearer in the article by Bjørn Smestad, which discusses the curriculum and representation of the LGBT community. Using queer theory, Smestad probes the heteronormativity of Norwegian school textbooks and analyses their openness to and inclusion of LGBT issues. He concludes that despite the fact that LGBT people are more visible on the pages of the school textbooks, heteronormativity remains prevalent, and bisexual and transgendered people are far less visible than is the case for lesbian and gay people. In conclusion, Smestad also raises the question of the best pedagogical approach for teaching about LGBT issues—highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of the one-subject approach versus a crosscutting nomadic perspective approach.

The important role of teacher education in developing teacher professionalism and preparing pre-service teachers to work for the benefit of a globalised future is addressed by Katriina Maaranen, Virginija Bortkeviciene, Hermina Gunnthorsdottir, Karin Hjalmeskog, Ilze Ivanova and Brit Steinsvik. The authors report on an intensive international course that brought together student teachers from Nordic and Baltic countries, supporting them in developing their professionalism around the questions of inclusion and diversity, among other topics. The authors show that teacher professionalism can be cultivated by engaging aspiring students from different country contexts. They explore the critical discussions on teaching methods and professional values, which gradually build student teachers' own professional theory for teaching. Finally, they issue a call for future research to pay more attention to support systems for newly qualified teachers.

The article by Heidi Biseth, Janne Madsen and Ingrid Reite Christensen continues on the topic of teacher professionalism and the changing conditions of teachers' work by asking: What characterises student teachers' competence of democratic engagement when using social media in teaching? The authors are interested in education for democracy, in particular, the deployment of social media and ICTs by student teachers to promote democratic engagement. The authors frame their analysis in terms of different conceptions of democracy as well as the transition of much of everyday activity, including private and public engagement, to the virtual world. This development requires student teachers, and teacher educators, to learn to use technology for democratic engagement in a "thick" manner. The findings of this article warn against naive assumptions of active digital citizenship through digital engagement, and the authors challenge teacher educators to develop ways to prepare student teachers to uphold thick democratic values and participation through both digital and analogue means.

Finally, a reflective methodological article by Supriya Baily dives into research practices and discusses a topic of relevance to scholars conducting cross-cultural research in a language other than their mother tongue and using translators and interpreters in data

collection and analysis. The article asks how data are co-constructed through multiple engagements between the researcher, informant, and translator. Bailey poses important questions and reflects on whose voice is represented in data in which an interpreter makes the encounter possible. Baily reflects on the role of the interpreter from the perspective of research transparency, positionality, and reflexivity. She also argues that despite the fact that cross-country, cross-cultural research often relies on interpreters' contributions, researcher training has not equipped researchers with the skill of deploying interpreters or the methodological sensitivity to understand the multiple subtle roles and impacts of interpretation in data generation and analysis.

The last contribution in this issue is the first forum article of NJCIE. A forum article is not peer reviewed; it is an informed and critically reflective contribution to a contemporary topic and draws from different experiences of relevance to researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers. Ragnhild Dybdahl and Astrid Christensen reflect on their experiences of teaching and mentoring exchange students in a developing country and consider both the challenges and opportunities faced by students. Dybdahl and Christensen maintain that being an exchange student in a widely different setting from what the students are used to provides them with new learning opportunities and engagement in global action for sustainable development. However, the authors also identify several challenges that exchange students need to cope with in developing countries, including safety and security risks, lack of welfare structures, inequality and power struggles. They argue that universities need to take into account that the students do not have the prerequisites for knowing the challenges before they leave and should, therefore, facilitate professional training and preparation prior to departure. To conclude, the authors suggest a checklist to be used in selecting sites and assessing the suitability of student projects prior to their exchange abroad.

We believe that the articles in this issue will offer thought-provoking and stimulating perspectives and will remind us all that human rights and democratic freedoms are fragile achievements in need of constant attention from educators and the research community.

The editors,  
Greta Gudmundsdottir and Nelli Piattoeva